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ABSTRACT

In an effort to gather data on faculty, student, and support staff participation in the governance process, case studies were undertaken at three community colleges in Alberta, Canada. Interviews were conducted with 51 individuals at the colleges from the following categories: faculty, students, or support staff; public board members; college presidents and vice presidents; and presidents of associations. With respect to the impact or influence of the institutional members on the decision-making process, an analysis of interview transcripts indicated that staff and student members had little to moderate direct effect on decision making. However, it was also clear that presidents, vice presidents, and public board members recognized the presence and interests of the faculty, student, and staff members and brought forward issues in a manner that resulted in consensus. As a result of the case studies, the following guideline were developed for ensuring that effective faculty, student, or staff board members are selected: (1) they should possess an appropriate mix of abilities, interpersonal and group process skills, and relevant previous experience; (2) they should adhere to the expectation that they function as trustees rather than delegates; (3) faculty, student, and staff associations should nominate their most effective members to board positions; and (4) college boards and associations should eliminate any barriers to the integration of these members. Contains 25 references. (TGI)

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FACULTY, STUDENT AND SUPPORT STAFF PARTICIPATION IN COLLEGE GOVERNANCE: AN EVALUATION

A presentation to the

Association of Canadian Community Colleges'

Annual Conference

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INTRODUCTION

The practice of granting members of a college or university community an opportunity to participate in the governance of their institution is a relatively recent phenomenon in North America, and there has been variation in its adoption, particularly in the United States and among Canada's college sectors. By 1991 seven of Canada's provinces and territories had made legislative provision for employee and/or student participation on college boards; however, five of the seven include new institutions or recent province-wide governance changes (Wood, 1991). In the United States, less than five per cent of the community college include student and/or faculty members on their boards (Drake, 1977), and a later study of a large sample of two- and four-year institutions found that less than three per cent of the trustees were faculty or students (Association of Governing Boards, 1986).

This paper reports the findings of my doctoral research (Wood, 1991) which investigated the participation of academic staff, student and non-academic staff representatives, nominated by their peers and appointed by the Minister of Advanced Education, in the governance of their colleges. The research was conducted in 1988 at three institutions in Alberta. The paper begins with an overview of the origins of institutional participation in college board governance and a brief outline of my research process. The impact or influence of the institutional members is described in the third section. The primary emphasis of the paper is on evaluating institutional participation as a governance process. The final section presents guidelines which can assist all stakeholders in enhancing the effectiveness of institutional representatives.

ORIGINS OF INSTITUTIONAL PARTICIPATION

Considerable controversy exists among Canadian and American academics and practitioners about the desirability of including faculty and students as full participants on the boards of colleges and universities. For this reason, it is important to understand the origins of institutional participation as part of the Alberta model of college governance. This first section will survey the relevant historical background and highlight some of the arguments which were used to support institutional participation prior to its establishment by provincial statute in 1969.

Governance Issues during the 1960's

Across North America many institutional structures were called into question as a part of the social ferment of the 1960's. University and college boards of governors were criticized for their lack of faculty and student participation and various models of institutional participation were proposed.

Supporters of institutional memberships on boards believed communication of the board to constituent groups and vice versa would be greatly improved. Whalley (1964) argued that the interaction of public and faculty board members would be mutually beneficial with each group gaining a better understanding of the other's world. The Duff-Berdahl (1966) study of university governance in Canada strongly recommended that faculty be included on boards for three reasons related to organizational communications: public board members would gain a better understanding of academics, senate-board communication would be improved, and the faculty as a group would gain a better understanding of the board.

> Advocates of greater participation in decision making argued that employees and students hold a right to participate because "citizenship" in the organization carries certain rights just as citizenship in a democracy carries certain rights (Ross, 1976). Because democratic governments derive their authority from the governed, "legislative authority . . . (in a college or university) does not and cannot come from the trustees as corporate owners. It can only come from the expressed wishes of the constituent members of the campus" (Perkins, 1973, p. 12).

Henry Kolesar (1968b), Executive Assistant to and later Chairman of Alberta's Provincial Board of Post-Secondary Education, drew principles from the academic study of organizations and concluded that "a staff member's participation shall assist to overcome the management-labour dichotomy which is not desirable in a professional organization; student representation shall provide for the prime beneficiaries of the services . . . a voice in this level of deliberation" (p. 14) Similarly, Kelly and Konrad (1972) supported faculty and student participation in college governance because member participation in organizational life in general and governance in particular has these benefits: "decreased alienation, improved decision making, increased involvement and commitment to an organization, a growing sense of member control over bureaucracy, improved organizational adaptation to societal change, as well as an enhanced opportunity for individual psychological growth within an organization" (p. 12).

The questioning of university structures did have an impact on the composition of university board during the 1960's. Houwing and Kristjanson (1975) provide striking evidence of change in their summary of studies sponsored by the Association of Universities and Colleges in Canada:

> For the three years in question - 1965, 1970 and 1975 - the percentage of boards with other administrators has gone from 29% to 36% and now to 44%; for boards with faculty members the figures are 32% to 73% to 92% and for those with student members zero to 47% to 78% (p 8 - 9).

More specifically, The Universities Act of 1966 in Alberta reflected the spirit of the times by establishing two faculty positions on the board at the University of Alberta and at the new University of Calgary. The act was amended in 1969 to grant students seats on university boards.

Provincial Board of Post-Secondary Education

Expansion of the college and other sectors of the Alberta post-secondary system during the 1960's was accompanied by concerns about the financing and governance of colleges, the role of the University of Alberta in controlling transfer programs and the appropriate mandate of colleges. One outgrowth of the debate about college related issues was the creation of the Provincial Board of Post-Secondary Education (PBPSE) in 1967. The Board, appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council, was made up of 15 persons drawn from colleges, the department of education, school districts, the Alberta Teachers' Association, the Alberta School Trustees' Association, the Department of Agriculture, the University of Alberta.

In February 1968, the Board considered ten recommendations, designed to serve as principles for legislative changes, which had been prepared by Dr. G. L. Mowat, Chairman of the Board. Proposal 3 is relevant to this topic: "That the five public junior colleges, the three agricultural colleges and the two institutes of technology be brought under the direct administrative control of boards of governors" (Minutes of the PBPSE, Feb. 14, 1968, p. 2).

One month later the Board reviewed the second draft of the proposals and directed the Chairman to present them to the Minister of Education. There was a general discussion of board composition and selection at that meeting. The minutes indicate that no conclusions were attempted but some Board members indicated favour for:

1. Appointed Governors rather than Governors elected at large.
2. Staff and student representation on the board.
3. A relatively small number of members to constitute a Board. The number seven received most support.
4. The possibility of variation of Board size in different centers (Minutes of the PBPSE, March 13, 1968, p. 4)

The minutes also record that these four items were to be translated into proposals for legislation if the total package of proposals was supported by government.

The discussion of board composition was held in the context of a discussion paper prepared by Dr. Henry Kolesar (1968a) which surveyed board composition,

selection and powers at a sample of colleges and universities across North America. Kolesar began his paper with reference to the Duff-Berdahl study of university governance and then summarized its recommendations which included support for faculty members on boards and one member elected by students. The rest of the paper was made up of extracts from legislation and board bylaws from various systems, colleges and universities. Only a minority of these, including Alberta's The Universities Act (1966), made provisions for faculty membership on boards and only two included students.

The Colleges Act of 1969

Legislation passed in 1969 incorporated all but one of the eight proposals prepared by the PBPSE. Alberta's five public colleges were to be governed by boards made up of the president and seven persons appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council. Two of the persons appointed by the Lieutenant Government in Council would include a faculty member nominated by the academic staff association and a student nominated by the students' council. The Board's recommendation that board governance be extended to the three other colleges and two technical institutes was rejected by the government; however, by 1981 boards had been established at those institutions.

Non-Academic Staff Member

The third institutional member was added to college boards in 1981 with an amendment to the Colleges Act of 1980. The records of the Department of Advanced Education, the Legislative Assembly and the Provincial Archives provide little information about the background to this change. The only reference appears in a December 1, 1980 "Ministerial Request for Legislation" which identifies the addition of a non-academic staff member and offers this justification: "some boards recommend that non-academic staff be represented on the Board" (Alberta Advanced Education, 1980, n.p.).

THE RESEARCH PROCESS

In order to gather data about institutional participation, I conducted case study research at three of Alberta's eleven colleges. Information was obtained through intensive interviews with 16 - 18 people at each institution. The 51 interviewees can be divided into five categories: faculty, student and support staff members; public board members; college presidents and vice-presidents, and presidents of associations. Additional data sources included documents and observations of board meetings.

After all of the interviews had been conducted, I prepared verbatim transcripts of each one from the audiotapes. These were sent back to the interviewees for verification. The next step involved creating a topical coding system. Over 1400 pages of transcript were analyzed to identify each of the topical units within those pages. A unit ranged in length from one or two sentences to several pages. Each unit was assigned a numerical code which identified the college, the interviewee and the topic. All the transcripts were computer sorted according to topic. Each major topic became a section in the three case studies which were written about the colleges.

A number of guidelines were established to ensure anonymity and confidentiality for the participants. These were provided to each person before the interview began. Each college and each interviewee was assigned a pseudonym in the dissertation. Descriptive information about the institutions was kept to a minimum. No one had access to the tapes or transcripts. Each person received a copy of the transcript in order to correct any errors and identify any parts which could not be quoted in the report. Participants were made aware of their right to withdraw from the study at any time; one person chose to do so after seeing the transcript of the interview.

Case study research provides rich, in-depth portraits of the topic under study. People's opinions, attitudes and actions are explored and the complexities of group interaction are revealed. At the same time, case study research does not allow for generalization to other situations. Whatever was true for the three college boards included in this study may or may not be true of other boards in Alberta.

IMPACT

As a first step in evaluating faculty, student and support staff participation in college board governance, the section will summarize information provided by the participants about the impact or effect which institutional members had on the decision-making issues, processes and outcomes at their colleges. One of the vice presidents at Henday Community College expressed the opinion that this topic was really asking the question: "Would the world be different if they weren't there?"

I gathered information about this topic in a number of ways. First, I asked each of the public members, presidents, vice presidents and presidents of associations within the colleges to offer their assessment of the institutional members' impact. Second, these same people, with the exception of the presidents of the associations, rank ordered the first most influential members of their boards as a way of determining if any of the employee and student members fell within that group. Third, each of the employee and student members provided a self-assessment. Fourth, two case studies of important decision issues were prepared

as a part of the larger case study of each board. These case studies within a case study provided a vehicle for determining the institutional members' influence in specific situations.

While there was substantial variation from institutional member to institutional member and from college to college, the overall impact of the employee and student members on the boards' formal decision making ranged from limited to moderate. The public members and the presidents used phrases such as "some fairly subtle influence," "board members are influenced considerably (by them) . . . but not very often," "board members listen very carefully to what they have to say because they are in the institution," and the institutional members' contributions "are not an eye opener but certainly they are good contributions." Only one person, the faculty board member at Thompson Community College, was consistently identified as one of the five most influential board members.

The institutional members' assessments of their impact reflect significant diversity of opinion and both compliment and contradict the opinions of other interviewees. These self-assessments can be best illustrated by reporting the observations of one member from each college. Clearly Gordon Dombrowsky, the support staff member at Henday Community College, believed he had meaningful impact:

> I prefer to be active, and, as a result, they have to recognize me as being active and credible. So I have an impact. My impact depends entirely on the issue. Generally on instructional things, policy-type things, I think I can make an impact, more opportunities to revitalize ourselves, instructional development.

His perspective is consistent with the views of a number of public members who considered him to be the most influential of the three institutional members on Henday's Board.

While Roberta Faulkner at Thompson Community College was given a high influence rating by her board colleagues, she saw herself in a different light:

> I don't think I have a high impact, but I'm not sure anyone does in their first year. I have felt that there has been generally a respect for me and for my positions on things. Because of the way I see the board run, I have very little impact at the board table. Maybe through other mechanisms and other means such as "flagging" issues and private conversations.

Janice Delaney, the faculty board member at Mackenzie Community College, provided the most comprehensive self-assessment. From her perspective, the rest of the Board received information about education and the college community

which would have been available to them without her position; "otherwise they rely just on the information the President gives them which is only a certain kind of communication." Even if institutional members had no information about a particular topic, they were more likely than public members to know what questions to ask. In another context, she expressed the same idea when she said institutional members "can educate the public members a little bit" and "they have been receptive to anything I have brought in." Janice saw her presence and that of the student and support staff members as having reduced the likelihood of inevitable bias from the President and vice presidents because "when they are making comments or reports they know that you are there and certainly that might influence them."

This section has considered impact in relation to the formal decision-making function of college boards. This is an important measure, but, as the study progressed, I realized that other dimensions were just as important. These relate to the impact which institutional members have on the role and goals of boards, communication between boards and their college communities, and the effect of putting into practice values and beliefs which are commonly held by staff and students in colleges and universities. While the assessments of impact provided in this section indicate institutional members' had a limited to moderate impact on decision making, these other factors are equally important and point to a greater impact for institutional members than first suggested in this section. This theme will be explored in the next section.

EVALUATION

The process of evaluation involves making judgements about the merit or worth of something. In this case, one of the goals of my study was to determine the value of employee and student members serving on college boards. Given the arguments in favour of institutional participation reported in an earlier section, it is reasonable to conclude that institutional participation should add something of substantial value to colleges and their boards. Determining the merit or worth of a particular policy, program or process involves comparing it with the goals or purposes established for it and making judgements about the degree of congruence between the actual process and the standard expressed in the goals or purpose. This section does that by identifying the goals of institutional participation as expressed by academics and practitioners and comparing the research findings with those goals.

1. Employees and students, as participants in and consumers of education (e.g., Riley, 1977) should be given a voice in decision making because "they are the ones most affected by the decisions" (Gould, 1973, p. 219).

A common theme uniting all participants at the three colleges was the opinion that institutional members were valuable sources of information about decision issues, a source which could not be duplicated in any other way. In particular, they provided information about the possible impacts of decision alternatives. Public members received a more balanced perspective on issues because presidents could not be expected to know all the ramifications of issues for constituent groups. Faculty, student and support staff board members provided a more objective view than their interest group presidents because of the clear expectation that they approach decision issues from an institutional rather than interest group perspective. Faculty board members had an opportunity to educate public members about the college and the issues which were important to instructors.

Byron McGregor, a public member, reflected this theme by saying the presence of employee and student members "assure continued focus on the reason why we are there. I think it has a good balancing effect to have the people who are underneath the umbrella looking up providing some insights and comments." A president presented much the same idea and developed it further by saying the institutional members frequently take an "internally driven" focus and the public are "totally externally driven" and the mix of perspectives "brings a nice balance" to the board's decision making.

The president and the public members at Thompson Community College spoke of institutional participation as a strength and pointed to the value placed on institutional members' contributions to decision making. Their comments included opinions such as "how else are we going to know what they want, what are we doing wrong as far as they are concerned," "the institutional members broaden the base of the Board because the odds are you are going to get a different political philosophy from them," "every piece of input you can get is valuable," "there are so many things you (the Board) don't understand when you are not physically involved," and "I think it (institutional participation) does not try to make it look like the Board is part of the whole group. I like that closeness."

2. Institutional members can serve as two-way interpreters between boards and their constituent groups (e.g., Gould, 1973; Konrad, 1980).

It is clear that institutional participation had a positive impact on the boards' relationships with their college communities. The public members and president at Thompson Community College indicated they learned to put more emphasis on intra-college relationships because of the repeated concerns expressed by the faculty board member. Institutional members served as a medium of

communication from the boards to their constituent groups and increased the credibility of the boards.

Because two-way communication was improved, "armed camps" did not develop between the board and the employees or the board and the students. While not board members, vice presidents similarly benefited in their relationships with members of the college community by being sensitive to the issues and concerns presented by the employee and student members.

3. Colleges are professional organizations with distinctive needs in terms of participation and communication and the process of institutional participation responds to that need (Kolesar, 1968b; Pitman, 1986).

Colin Davey, President of Thompson Community College, believed there was a relationship between institutional participation and a positive organizational climate in an educational institution. He developed this idea by saying

> There is more of an atmosphere of trust. If you don't have mechanisms to make it possible for people to intercede in a college, you have a very explosive situation. I think it meets that need. I think we would have far more groups making presentations to the Board, submissions to the Board, much more going on about what is the Board up to, suspicion and issues created where there weren't really issues.

Larry Michetti, like Colin, described the impact institutional participation had on organizational climate:

> I think symbolically it is good and functionally it usually validates that symbolic worth. I think it makes people feel good that they (the institutional members) are there, and, as long as the dynamic stays fairly positive, they feel that at least they are being heard even if they aren't agreed with.

Amy Hansen spoke of her experiences in colleges in another province and observed that Henday had the best atmosphere because of the various opportunities for participation in decision making which existed at the College. She spoke of institutional participation as a pressure or release valve because the institutional members'

> constituent groups know there is a voice in the private session. Everybody has access to the public session so I guess you could say that's there anyway, but the truth of it is that you've got representation, you've got a voice, you've got some kind of valve that is there in the private session.

In addition, Amy said institutional members limited arbitrary action on the part of college administrators because the faculty, student and support staff members acted as a check and balance at the board level.

Colin Davey and vice presidents Larry Michetti and Bryce Fullerton from Thompson Community College provided additional illustrations of the link between institutional participation and organizational climate. Colin's observations were the most direct:

> Perhaps because I am aware they (the institutional members) are there, I am shaping recommendations in such a way that they are acceptable to the total Board. I try not to, I guess it is sort of unconscious, not to get them (the institutional members) taking different sides at the Board.

Larry said he consciously monitored his use of language so that he would not be misinterpreted by the faculty member because "words and symbols are emotional things" for academics. At the same time, "the recommendation is still in essence the same." Bryce pointed out how the vice presidents' contact with the institutional members increased their administrative effectiveness and, by inference, improved the climate of the College:

> We pick up impressions, attitudes from those three representatives that sometimes make us a little more cautious or watchful and maybe a little more perceptive in how we deal with those populations. If you are thinking and observing, there are cues that can make your job a little earlier.

4. Institutional participation reflects the application of democratic principles to organizational life.

Certainly democratic principles are operationalized when associations within the college nominate a representative and exercise some accountability by suasion and the elective process. While the institutional members included in this study were representatives of associations, they did not act as the protectors of the specific interests of their groups or peers because of the role expectations they encountered. Institutional members were able to reflect their groups' general interests rather than member problems by setting those interests in the context of institutional interests.

The political science concept of checks and balances effectively captures the application of democratic principles to college governance. It has been used throughout American history to refer to the separation of powers among the legislative, executive and judicial branches of government as well as different departments and levels of government in a federal system (Plano & Greenberg,

1985). In essence, the power of any element in a political system "can be prevented from becoming absolute by being balanced against, or checked by, another power" (Scruton, 1982, p. 60).

Applying the literal meaning of the concept to faculty, student and support staff participation in board governance, it is clear that institutional members didn't have the constitutional authority to limit the power of other office holders. In contrast, their ability to act as a check and balance resulted form their opportunity to provide information, offer reactions, ask leading or challenging questions and report the perceptions of their peers. In large part board members were attentive to these kinds of activities and presidents, senior administrators and chairmen anticipated institutional members acting in that capacity and modified their actions accordingly. There appeared to be a direct relationship between an institutional member's credibility and his/her ability to act as a check and balance.

One president and several vice presidents recognized the impact of informal checks and balances upon their own behaviour. Colin Davey said the institutional members remind the Board of its responsibilities, and he indicated he shaped his recommendations to the Board to reflect the interests represented by the internal members. According to Amy Hansen, the college must be true to its own standards because internal members were at the board table. The most direct example was suggested by Wayne Allison when he recognized that his credibility in the eyes of the Board could be tested by the institutional members and so he made sure his presentations were credible to them.

5. Institutional participation should increase a board's responsiveness to the needs of the college community.

The earlier discussion of the impact which faculty, student and support staff board members had on formal decision making suggested that they had only limited to moderate effect. This would imply, on the surface, that they did not significantly increase the board's responsiveness to the college community; however, it was very clear that they did have an impact because of the anticipatory dimension discussed earlier. Presidents, vice president and public board members consciously and unconsciously recognized their presence and the interests they represented and brought forward issues and recommendations in a manner and followed processes that resulted in consensus among board members on the vast majority of issues.

As a part of the evaluation of institutional participation, it is important to consider the arguments from practitioners and academics who oppose employee and student memberships on college boards. Nine basic arguments were identified in the literature; these have been grouped into four themes.

1. Institutional memberships on college or university boards are inappropriate because trustees are the corporate authority serving as the agents of the public's interest (e.g., Rauh, 1973).

In Alberta the composition of boards, as defined in the Colleges Act (1980), maintains a strong public presence. Because institutional members were expected to think and act from an institutional perspective rather than an interest group perspective, they did not weaken the boards' mandate to be the trustees of the public good. In addition, public members of college boards in Alberta are largely chosen on the basis of their personal, professional and community achievements and, as a result, have the knowledge and personal resources to define and represent the public good.

2. Faculty or student board members are not necessarily representative of their constituent groups (The Carnegie Commission, 1973).

The faculty board members at Henday, Thompson and Mackenzie Community Colleges were representative in that they were senior members of faculty, had a long history of service to their colleges and associations, and were credible in the eyes of their peers and administrators. The majority of the student and support staff members apparently were also representative, defined as being knowledgeable about their groups' interests and reflecting views common within their groups. On balance, the problem of representativeness is not unique to college governance; it exists whenever one person is selected to speak or act for a group.

The presidents of the faculty associations at Henday and Thompson colleges provided explanations which indicate how their groups ensured representativeness did in fact exist. In Ross Fast's opinion, people who are leaders within the Association are the ones who "would want to be in the position of (board member) trying to have the Association recognized and heard." If someone indicated an interest in the board position but had not served the Association "the executive (gets) in gear at that point saying this is a pivotal position. We have to make sure we have people in those spots that are in sync with the Association." In a like manner, Blake Parkes from Thompson stated that his Association had always sought to nominate someone to the position who would be credible in the eyes of the Board:

> We try and get someone in there who we think is going to be able to speak well with the Board and develop some degree of respect at the board table. I think [credibility results from] a combination of long service, possibly having, as in Roberta's case, served in an administrative position. Just generally active with the Association but not seen as a trouble maker.

3. Students are not qualified for the role of trustee, and their presence on a board reduces its effectiveness.

Riley (1977) has summarized the common arguments presented against student board participation in this way:

> students are largely unaware of existing power-integration mechanisms; few issue-oriented student groups are ever formed; students primarily play a protest role, using board membership to act out authority problems; complex problems are dealt with superficially by joint groups of students, trustees, and administrators -- with the real problem solving done later by smaller groups of trustees and members of the administrative and faculty decision structure (p. 244).

These concerns were not substantiated by this study. The three students who were part of the study varied in credibility and effectiveness as a result of a number of factors such as age, level of education, experience in the community and workplace, political sophistication and length of term. All participants supported student memberships on the boards, largely because they represent "consumers" of the colleges' educational services.

4. Institutional members represent interest groups which means their participation constitutes a conflict of interest (e.g., The Carnegie Commission, 1973; Dennison & Gallagher, 1986).

Public board members and college presidents spoke with an almost uniform voice about role expectations for institutional members. Even though they were either employees or students and were nominated by election within their associations, institutional members were expected to be trustees first and to share the same general responsibilities as their colleagues appointed from the community. The interests of the institution should be given precedence over those of their constituencies. While they represented an interest group, they should speak and act as individuals. A number of participants expected institutional members to report the concerns and interests of their peers but in an objective rather than advocacy manner. They were expected to provide information to their groups about the priorities and work of the board.

Government documents addressed conflict of interest as it applied to all board members and did not make specific reference to the special circumstances of employee and student members. The bylaws of two boards excluded those issues which affected the institutional members' association from their definition of conflict of interest. In practice, however, one of these boards excluded

institutional members from major standing committees partly because of concerns about conflict of interest. The bylaws of the third board defined conflict of interest but did not make specific reference to employee and student members. The faculty member was excluded from board meetings whenever faculty labour relations were discussed, apparently at the initiative of the president.

The faculty, student and support staff board members defined their roles consistent with those expectations, with only a few exceptions, thus eliminating any basis for concern about conflict of interest. Individuals spoke of placing the institution first, voting as individuals and communicating their knowledge and insights based on their primary college role. Several emphasized conveying the opinions of their employee or student peers along with or in addition to the interests of their association's executive.

Despite their reservations about institutional participation, Dennison and Gallagher (1986) recognize that the consensus about role expectations which was documented in this study negates many of their concerns. Based on their research, they conclude that "Alberta colleges have been successful with faculty members on boards by making, and respecting, the distinction between faculty members 'selected by" but not "representatives of' or accountable to their peers" (p. 190).

FACTORS AFFECTING EFFECTIVENESS

In each case study it was possible to identify four or five major factors which increased or decreased the effectiveness of faculty, student and support staff board members. In this section I extrapolate from the analytical findings reported in the dissertation and offer a number of guidelines for institutional members, public board members, presidents and college associations which will be of value in increasing the effectiveness of institutional members. These guidelines can be divided into four major topics.

1. The most effective institutional member is the one who best possesses the appropriate mix of abilities, interpersonal and group process skills, and relevant previous experience.

The institutional members' impact ranged from limited to moderate. The three faculty members fell into the moderate category, and, in each case, it was possible to identify the significance of their education and previous leadership and/or administrative positions. Each was skilful in group processes, an effective communicator, and successful in interpersonal relationships. On the other hand, the full range of impact was evident in each of the other two subgroups. Education, age and previous experience did not appear to be the features which

distinguished individuals with moderate impact from those with limited impact. For example, two mature students with the same educational level differed significantly in impact. In this case the variation resulted from differences in communication skills, political judgement and group participation skills.

Roberta Faulkner, the faculty representative at Thompson Community College, was the only institutional member to be consistently recognized as part of the most powerful group within her board by public members and senior administrators. In order to meet the expectations of her board position, Roberta made sure she had a total grasp of the implications of any decision before she entered the board room. In meetings she provided information, asked questions to draw out a position when she didn't agree, spoke for or against the President's position on its merits and voted accordingly. Her strategy, in summary, involved putting the institution first and trying to be very rational. Any questions she asked had to be based on something that she considered to be objective.

Janice Delaney was very conscious of meeting the expectations of the situation; as a result, she was very sensitive, particularly at the outset, about everything she said and other people's perceptions of her ideas. She tried very hard to discuss issues from an institutional rather than an interest group perspective. She referred to the Faculty Association in the third person and reported rather than supported their views. To further define her independence, she invited the President of the Faculty Association to make the monthly report to the Board. Like Roberta, she did her homework because organization and preparation were the keys to credibility.

Gordon Dombrowsky, Elizabeth Radke and Janice Neuman's strategies to establish and maintain their influence were similar. Gordon was an active participant in meetings when the topics were of interest and he felt knowledgeable. He carried concerns, on occasion, from the Support Staff Association to the Board but always with actions that defined his independence so that he wouldn't look like the group's delegate. He attended all the board-related functions to demonstrate his seriousness to other board members. Janice's and Elizabeth's activities included presenting ideas effectively, distancing themselves from their interest groups, focusing on the merits of the issue and maintaining and projecting personal honesty.

2. <u>Institutional members should continue to adhere to the expectation that they function as trustees rather than delegates</u>.

Institutional members were expected to assume the general role expectations for all board members, balance their board and interest group participation and give priority to their board role in trade off situations. Their board colleagues wanted

them to share their special expertise as members of the college community but not be advocates for the interests of their associations.

Those institutional members who were rated as having the most impact were also the ones who were described as adhering most closely to those role expectations. In order to achieve credibility, most institutional members recognized the norms of the group, followed established procedures, communicated with logic and persuasion, and demonstrated commitment for institutional rather than interest group values and concerns. The faculty subgroup was most successful in achieving credibility and attendant influence; there was greater variation within the other two subgroups.

Without the autonomy central to a trustee's role, institutional members would not be able to establish credibility in the eyes of the public members. Credibility---arising from a trustee's role and other personal, experiential and interpersonal attributes---constitutes the fundamental political resource which institutional members can use to influence their board colleagues.

A delegate's role would result in increased conflict and the probable isolation of employees and students as individuals or as subgroups.

3. Faculty, student and support staff associations should nominate their most effective members to the board position.

Individuals who are highly credible within their associations and the college community are the most likely to achieve influence with their board colleagues. There are a number of indicators which can be used to predict a person's likelihood of success as an institutional board member:

- broad knowledge of the college in the case of employee members, particularly knowledge of the issues affecting other staff groups
- appropriate interpersonal skills
- effective oral communication skills
- the ability to present an opinion or alternative in an objective manner
- the ability to understand the complex interests which are associated with almost all decision issues
- a demonstrated commitment to the well-being of the college community as a whole rather than the interests of one group

- o an understanding of the world view which public members bring to bear on college issues based on their professional, business and community roles

- o skills in building consensus and compromise.

Given the complexities associated with the simultaneous employee-student and interest group-board roles, associations should ensure that their nominees have demonstrated the abilities identified above in prior experiences. In addition, associations, should periodically clarify their understanding of the role of institutional board member and the qualifications that are necessary for effective participation.

4. College boards and associations should eliminate any factors or barriers which unnecessarily affect the integration and effectiveness of institutional members.

Numerous examples of necessary changes can be identified from the case studies. Given this study's conclusion that conflict of interest issues did not and need not arise, institutional members should have proportional representation on all board committees except, in the case of employee members, those dealing with labour relations. No institutional member should be excluded from any portion of a board meeting regardless of the topic. The faculty, student and support staff associations should ensure that their board representatives do not hold any other executive office within their associations because dual positions within an association will jeopardize institutional members' role as a trustee. Employee associations should review the length of term they specify for their representatives with a view to lengthening their service. More emphasis needs to be placed on the orientation of new institutional members, especially student and support staff representatives. Board chairpersons need to be particularly sensitive to integrating institutional members into the board as a social and decision-making group, given their shorter terms and, in some cases, more limited experience base.

CONCLUSION

My research study originated, in large part, from a curiosity about institutional participation in governance because it was a well-established element on the college sector in Alberta but was uncommon in other college sectors in North America. The evaluative material presented in this paper and the findings and conclusions reported in the larger study confirm that institutional participation is a valuable element of Alberta's model of college governance because it operationalizes organizational values central to the culture of colleges and universities. To date, most of the debate about institutional participation has been dominated by opinion rather than research

evidence. The results of this study provide a basis for a more grounded consideration of the issues in the future.

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